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25494
BS20386



Biotechnology Notes

Volume 7 • Number 4

U.S. Department of Agriculture

April 1994

Biotechnology Notes, a compilation of agency activities, news events, and upcoming meetings, is prepared for members of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Committee on Biotechnology in Agriculture (CBA) by USDA's Office of Agricultural Biotechnology (OAB).

INSIDE USDA

FSIS POLICY ON FOOD SAFETY AND TRANSGENIC ANIMALS

USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) has published requirements that should be met before livestock or poultry from transgenic animal research can be submitted for slaughter. The requirements, which supplement guidelines that were set forth in 1986 and 1991 policy statements, are called "Points to Consider in the Food Safety Evaluation of Transgenic Animals from Transgenic Animal Research." According to FSIS, the document should provide consumers assurance that regulatory oversight is adequate to ensure the food safety of meat and poultry derived from transgenic research animals.

The document is a reminder to researchers that any transgenic research animal is considered experimental, and the researcher must comply with Federal meat and poultry inspection regulations when presenting these animals for slaughter.

The researcher must submit data to the headquarters staff at FSIS. If the agency finds there are no effects of food safety concern, then written approval is given and the animals can be presented for slaughter. At that time, the animals are identified to the Inspector-in-Charge as having been involved in research. They are kept as a separate lot throughout the slaughter procedure. If the animals do not deviate from established standards on antemortem and postmortem inspection (inspections before and after slaughter), they will be passed for human consumption.

In evaluating the food safety of transgenic animals, FSIS will use recommendations prepared by USDA's Agricultural Biotechnology Research Advisory Committee. For more details please see the March 17, 1994 *Federal Register*, Volume 59, No. 52, page 12582; or call Pat Basu at FSIS at 202-720-8623.

BIOTECHNOLOGY NOTES NOW ON INTERNET

Each issue of *Biotechnology Notes* will now be available on the INTERNET system, thanks to USDA's National Agricultural Library's Biotechnology Information Center (BIC) in Beltsville, MD. BIC has many biotechnology-related materials available electronically, including information on the Plant Genome and Data Information Center, and bibliographies of peer-reviewed scientific journal citations, with abstracts, on subjects ranging from bovine somatotropin to gene expression in algae and fungi.

To access these files via Gopher:

Type: telnet inform.umd.edu
Select: "educational resources" from menu
Select: "Biotechnology Information Center"
Select: "Biotech_Notes"

If you can only access e-mail, talk to your INTERNET provider about "FTPmail," a method of accessing these files via e-mail. Many of the current books about INTERNET also describe FTPmail. For more information, contact Daniel Cabirac at: biotech@nalusda.gov; or call him at 301-504-5947; Fax: 301-504-7098.

FELLOWSHIPS IN BIOTECHNOLOGY OFFERED

USDA's Cooperative States Research Service (CSRS) is now accepting proposals for the Food and Agricultural Sciences National Needs Graduate Fellowship Grants Program. This year's grants focus on animal biotechnology, food science and human nutrition, and agribusiness. To receive an application kit, please call 202-401-5048. Proposals mailed in should be postmarked no later than April 29, 1994. Proposals submitted by fax will not be accepted.

USING SCIENCE TO STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS

About 100 executives, directors of research, and senior scientists attended the conference "Biotechnology and Biomolecular Sciences Colloquium," March 15-16 in Richland, Washington. It was sponsored by Battelle Pacific Northwest Laboratories. Participants discussed potential partnerships among the U.S. Department of Energy's national laboratories, user facilities, other Federal agencies, and the biotechnology industry. According to the conference sponsor, these partnerships will strengthen the scientific foundation of the biomolecular sciences in support of biotechnology research in health care, the environment, energy production and use, agriculture, and national economic competitiveness.

Featured speaker Alvin Young, Director of the USDA's Office of Agricultural Biotechnology, presented an overview of the FY '93 and '94 Federal programs in biotechnology and biomolecular research. He talked about the current administration's reorganization and strengthening of White House science and technology functions. He said establishing the National Science and Technology Council within the White House will improve decisionmaking by consolidating and elevating functions previously carried out by a number of separate interagency councils. For more information about partnerships in biotechnology, please call Peter Van Voris at Battelle at 509-375-2498.

NEWS AROUND THE NATION (AND THE WORLD)

MAJOR EUROPEAN RESEARCH PROJECT LAUNCHED

Scientists at 117 laboratories in Europe have embarked upon a research program they hope will propel plant biotechnology into the 21st century. Coordinated by leading plant scientists from most European countries in association with a consortium at the John Innes Centre, Norwich, UK and the Max Planck Institute, Koln, Germany, the program is intended to help industry produce improved plants for agriculture. The program includes a major training component to help less well endowed laboratories.

The areas of research include plant and microbial biochemical genetics with an emphasis on new options for producing environmentally friendly agriculture and horticulture. For details, please write to A. Beadle, Coordinating Officer, John Innes Centre, Norwich Research Park, Colney, NR4 7UJ, UK.

NEW TOMATO TOPIC OF FDA MEETING

Calgene's Flavr Savr® tomato, a product of genetic engineering, will be the focus of discussion at a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) public advisory committee meeting, April 6-8 at the Renaissance Hotel, Dulles Airport, Herndon, VA. The committee will discuss the tomato in terms of the safety review of whole foods produced by biotechnology. A portion of the meeting will be set aside for public participation.

On April 6, the meeting begins at 1 p.m. and adjourns at 5:30 p.m. On April 7, the meeting runs from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. On April 8, the times are 8 a.m. to 9:15 a.m. More precise hours are set aside for public comments. For more information, please call Lynn Larsen at 202-205-4727; Fax: 202-205-4970.

BIOTECHNOLOGY IN IRELAND: NEW REFERENCE BOOK

This spring BioResearch Ireland will publish a *Sourcebook of Irish Biotechnology*. It will list companies and researchers involved in biotechnology in Ireland, along with project topics. Also included will be information about regulatory and support agencies, patent laws, and culture collections. For details about ordering a copy, please write to Cepta Brougham, BioResearch Ireland, Forbairt, Glasnevin, Dublin 9 Ireland; or call 353-1-370177; Fax: 353-1-370176.

MAURITIUS: THE MAKING OF A STRATEGY FOR BIOTECH RESEARCH

The December 1993 issue of *Biotechnology and Development Monitor* looks at the small country of Mauritius and the process it used to decide whether or not to get involved in biotechnology research. Mauritius' scientists, farmers, and policymakers are examining all sides of the issue, such as the cost of investment, the certainty of pay-offs, the demand for biotechnology applications, the type of research needed, which institutions will conduct it, and how priorities should be set.

According to the article, some of the necessary conditions are already there, such as the fact that private sector producers of fish, livestock, and ornamental plants are already involved in biotechnology applications. Also there is a core of well-trained biological scientists, and the University of Mauritius has good training programs.

The key constraints are the high cost of land and limited availability of labor; lack of high-quality genetic material for developing new crops, livestock, and aquaculture; small local markets; low research investments in agriculture; and limited access to information and technology.

Four consortia will hammer out specific goals and pass their findings on to the National Agricultural Biotechnology Advisory Committee. The Committee evaluates the goals, develops a strategy, and will then offer recommendations to the Minister for Agriculture and other relevant government authorities.

SECOND INTERNATIONAL CASSAVA MEETING

The Second International Meeting of the Cassava Biotechnology Network takes place August 21-26, 1994 in Indonesia. The purpose of the meeting is to evaluate progress/problems in applying biotechnology research methods to cassava. Those attending also plan to discuss obstacles to international communication, biosafety, and international property protection. Anyone involved in cassava biotechnology research

is invited to participate. For details write to Ann Marie Thro, Coordinator CNA, CIAT, AA 6713, Cali, Colombia; or call 57-23-675050; fax: 57-23-647243; e-mail: a.thro@cgnet.com

OUT OF AFRICA: BIOSAFETY REGULATIONS URGED

Participants at the "African Regional Conference for International Cooperation on Safety in Biotechnology" conference agreed that biosafety regulations were needed to ensure the safe application of biotechnology in Southern and Eastern African countries. According to the December issue of *Biotechnology and Development Monitor*, none of the countries in these regions has specific regulations, although several do enforce acts covering plant quarantine and animal health.

Regional cooperation was urged so countries could share information as well as expertise. A coordinating committee was established with one representative per country. Its goal will be to promote the development of guidelines and/or regulations in the region. The meeting took place in Harare, Zimbabwe, October 11-14, 1993.

IN CASE YOU WEREN'T THERE

■ Speaking at the 1994 National Food Policy Conference, March 10, in Washington, DC, John Dingell, Chairman of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, said the confusion over BST (bovine somatotropin) and food irradiation could be eliminated by a well-informed consumer. Ellen Haas, USDA Assistant Secretary for Food and Consumer Services, discussed Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy's plans for reinventing USDA. She outlined Espy's top priorities: nutrition, production agriculture, and rural development. EPA Administrator Carol Browner said the need is strong to change pesticide policy this year and overhaul the pesticide laws. She added that a proposal will soon be published in the *Federal Register* that proposes a single standard for all foods and makes pesticide registration mandatory. Other speakers talked about consumer "phobia" about genetic engineering and chemicals.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

■ *Genes, Crops and the Environment* by J. Holden, J. Peacock, and T. Williams. Published by Cambridge University Press. New York, NY 1993. Call 1-800-872-7423 to order.

■ *Release of Genetically Engineered and Other Microorganisms.* Edited by J. C. Fry and M. Day. 1993. Published by Cambridge University Press. New York, NY. To order call 1-800-872-7423.

■ "Agricultural Biotechnology: A Public Conversation About Risk." Edited by J. F. MacDonald. Published by the National Agricultural Biotechnology Council, Ithaca, NY. 1993. To order a copy, please write to NABC/BTI, 159 Biotechnology Bldg., Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853-2703.

■ "Advanced Manufacturing Technology: The Fiscal Year 1994 Federal Program in Manufacturing Science, Engineering, and Technology." Prepared by the Committee on Industry and Technology of the Federal Coordinating Council for Science, Engineering, and Technology to supplement the President's budget. August 1993. To receive a copy, send a request for publication number 93-221 to: Advanced Manufacturing Technology, c/o National Science Foundation, 4201 Wilson Blvd., Rm. P-15, Arlington, VA 22230; or fax a request to 703-644-4278.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

April 14-15: "Biotechnology: From Research to Product." This is a conference sponsored by Law Seminars International that takes place in Seattle, WA. For details call 206-621-1938.

May 3-6: "Biotechnology Applications in Space." University Park, PA. Penn State Biotechnology Institute. For course details call Patricia Phillips at 814-863-3650; Fax: 814-863-1357.

May 12: "Biotechnology and Food: A Public Issue for Extension Education." This is a national satellite program sponsored by the University of Wisconsin-Extension in cooperation with the University of California with funding by USDA. No downlink fee. For details call Tom Zinnen at 608-265-2420.

May 18-19: Meeting of USDA's Agricultural Biotechnology Research Advisory Committee. Washington, DC. Call 703-235-4419; Fax: 703-235-4429.

May 23-24: "NABC6: Agricultural Biotechnology and the Public Good." East Lansing, MI. For details write to NABC, 159 Biotechnology Bldg., Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14850-2701; call 517-355-0123; Fax: 517-353-5406; e-mail: 18215emh@ibm.cl.msu.edu

June 4-7: 1994 Congress on Cell and Tissue Culture: "Regulation of Cell and Tissue Differentiation." Research Triangle Park, NC. For details call 410-992-0946; Fax: 410-992-0949.

June 5-11: International Meeting on Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology. Frankfurt, Germany. Sponsored byACHEMA. For details write to DECHEMA, e.V., P.O. Box 15 01 04, D-60061, Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

June 7-11: "The Pacific Rim Biotechnology Conference." San Diego, CA. Sponsored by the International Federation for the Advancement of Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering News. Call 301-652-3072; Fax: 301-652-4951.

June 9: Symposium on "Basic and Applied Aspects of Aquatic Biotechnology Research." Windsor, Ontario, Canada. Takes place at the International Association of Great Lakes Research Annual Meeting, June 5-9. For details contact Jeffrey Ram, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI 48201; or send a fax to 313-577-5494.

June 19-25: International Association for Genetics in Aquaculture, 5th Symposium. Halifax, Canada. Write to Pamela Gaines, Marine Gene Probe Lab., Biology Dept., Dalhousie Univ., Halifax, NS B3H 4J1, Canada.

June 22-25: First International Conference on Risk Assessment Methodology. College Park, MD. Sponsored by USDA, EPA, and Environment Canada. Call 301-405-4560; Fax: 301-314-9032.

June 25-28: "Second International Weed Control Congress." Copenhagen, Denmark. Co-sponsored by the International Weed Science Society and the European Weed Research Society. For details write to ICS, International Conference Services A/S, Strandvejen 171, P.O. Box 41, DK-2900, Hellerup, Denmark.

June 26-July 1: Genetics of Industrial Microorganisms, 7th International Symposium. Montreal, Canada. Write to Symposium Secretariat, GIM '94, National Research Council. Canada, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0R6, Canada.

July 3-8: "Seventh International Congress of Bacteriology and Applied Microbiology Division and the Mycology Division." Prague, Czech Republic. Sponsored by the Czechoslovak Society for Microbiology. For details write to SCS Travel Agency Ltd., IUMS Congresses '94, Boticka 4, 128 00 Prague 2, Czech Republic; or call 42 2 297 698; Fax: 42 2 299 955.

July 4-6: Biotech '94. 2nd UK Congress of Biotechnology. Brighton, UK. Call 44-0788-578-214; Fax: 44-0788-577-182.

July 17-24: Genetics and Molecular Biology of Plant Nutrition, 5th International Symposium. Davis, CA. Call 916-752-1711; Fax: 916-752-4361.

Aug. 6-10: American Phytopathological Society Annual Meeting. Albuquerque, New Mexico. Write to APS, 3340 Pilot Knob Rd., St. Paul, MN 55121.

Aug. 8-12: International Marine Biotechnology Conference '94. Tromso, Norway. For details write to Harlyn O. Halvorson, Director, Policy Center for Marine Bioscience and Technology, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, Dartmouth, MA 02747-2300; Fax: 508-999-8901.

Aug. 15-19: A course on fermentation technology. Sponsored by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA. Contact Arnold Demain at 617-253-1711; Fax: 617-253-8550; E-mail: demain@mit.edu

Biotechnology Notes is written by Marti Asner, public affairs specialist in USDA's Office of Agricultural Biotechnology. Any comments or suggestions may be sent to USDA/OAB, Room 1001, Rosslyn Plaza-E, 14th and Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, DC 20250-2200. Telephone: 703-235-4419; Fax: 703-235-4429; Internet: masner@csrs.esusda.gov

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